

GLENVIEW, IL – Due to his leadership in passing legislation backing stem cell research, U.S. Representative Mark Kirk was named the Vice Chair of the bipartisan 280-member Diabetes Caucus in Congress.

Kirk joined the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) and the Glenview Park District to host the first 10th District Diabetes Summit today to provide Illinois families with an update on new research and treatment options being developed in Illinois. Local families and children with diabetes heard from some of the nation's top experts in diabetes research, including Myrlene Staten, M.D., Senior Advisor for Diabetes Translational Research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Cynthia Rice, Director of New Technology Access at JDRF, and Northwestern Professor William Lowe and University of Chicago Professor Christopher Rhodes.

"More than 175,000 kids have diabetes and more are contracting the disease each day," Congressman Kirk said. "We should be optimistic about the prospects for discovering a cure. Since the 1970s, Congress increased federal funding for diabetes research by 25-fold. Using pumps, monitors and new therapies, the lives of patients are improving. Congress will provide over \$450 million this year with the long term goal of finding a cure. In addition to expanding research funding, Congress also needs to provide the tools for scientists to make break-through discoveries. We need to support stem cell research to give researchers new avenues for genetic discoveries which promise to eradicate this disease that affects so many families."

In large part due to his strong support of stem cell research, Congressman Kirk was named the new Vice Chair of the Congressional Diabetes Caucus this year. The Diabetes Caucus was formed in 1996 and has grown to be the largest caucus in Congress with more than 280 members in the 109th Congress. The mission of the Caucus is to improve the lives of people with diabetes and support research to find a cure. Later this month, the caucus will host a "Day with Diabetes" where congressional staff members will have the opportunity to simulate living with diabetes for a day.

Congressman Kirk also discussed pending legislation in Congress including the Diabetes Prevention Access and Care Act of 2007 (H.R. 2210) which will promote diabetes research, treatment and education in minority communities. He has cosponsored the Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act of 2007 (H.R. 2922) which would extend Medicare coverage for medical nutrition therapy services to Medicare beneficiaries with pre-diabetes or with risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes. In addition, this year's House Health Appropriations bill would provide \$1.7 billion for the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases for

fiscal year 2008. This is a \$750 million increase from fiscal year 2007.

“Eleven-year-old Clara Livingston is one of the millions of reasons why we need to pass legislation to provide more medical services to diabetics, and particularly children,” Congressman Kirk said. “Clara was first diagnosed with diabetes when she was four years old. Like many diabetics, she must prick her finger at least eight times a day to test her blood sugar levels. She has to insert a one-and-a-half-inch needle into her stomach every two to three days. Her diet also is carefully monitored to regulate carbohydrates. These precautions are needed to prevent blindness, kidney failure and a shortened life span – all symptoms of juvenile diabetes. For Clara’s sake and for everyone living with diabetes, we need to mobilize every available resource to find a cure.”

The National Kidney Foundation of Illinois also participated in the summit by bringing its “KidneyMobile,” the nation’s first traveling chronic kidney disease screening unit. Participants received free diabetes, high blood pressure and chronic kidney disease screenings outside of the event.

JDRF is the leading charitable funder and advocate of type 1 (juvenile) diabetes research worldwide. The mission of JDRF is to find a cure for diabetes and its complications through the support of research. Type 1 diabetes is a disease which strikes children suddenly and requires multiple injections of insulin daily or a continuous infusion of insulin through a pump. Insulin, however, is not a cure for diabetes, nor does it prevent its eventual and devastating complications which may include kidney failure, blindness, heart disease, stroke, and amputation.

Since its founding in 1970 by parents of children with type 1 diabetes, JDRF has awarded more than \$1 billion to diabetes research, including more than \$122 million in FY2006. In FY2006, the Foundation funded 500 centers, grants and fellowships in 20 countries.